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## Letters to The Times

## To Act on Quemoy-Matsu

Evacuation of Offshore Islands  
Should Be Pushed, It Is Felt

The writer of the following letter, a long-time resident of the Orient, is Professor Emeritus of International Relations at Columbia.

To THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Does anybody remember Quemoy and Matsu? If not, is it a good idea to have forgotten, even in the tension of the Berlin crisis?

A few months ago the Chinese Communists were heavily shelling the offshore islands day by day. Against the possibility of what seemed imminent invasion we sent heavy reinforcements of ships, planes and men, presumably to fortify Formosa, possibly to defend the islands themselves. And so we stood, we and the Communist Chinese, confronting each other for weeks. Had a shell accidentally sunk an American ship or a reckless Chinese pilot deliberately sunk one, we should have been at war with China. Russia supporting China as its ally. Possibly world war could have been avoided, but not probably.

Then for some reason best known to themselves the Chinese, or the Chinese and Russians jointly, decided to call off the bombardment (because they thought Berlin offered better prospects?) and the danger passed. But has it passed for good?

## Resumption of Attack

Surely no one can believe that the Chinese Communists will permanently consent to islands within swimming distance of their shore being garrisoned by some 80,000 hostile Nationalist troops equipped with American arms. Sooner or later, perhaps after the Berlin issue has been settled or compromised and the Communist bloc deems it advisable to keep America off balance, the Communists will bombard the islands again.

Whether or not this time they intend to press the attack and actually invade the islands, we shall confront the same situation as last time. Again we shall have to send reinforcements. Plainly we cannot yield, once the issue has been precipitated. To retreat under fire is to invite attack elsewhere, quite likely in Southeast Asia. And this time the accident may happen, or a deliberate attack may be launched on American ships, and we shall have the war.

Must this be? Can it not be avoided? After we first made the treaty with Formosa we stood by and let Chiang Kai-shek send a large force into the islands. Then we did nothing while he reinforced them. After the narrow escape last year we still did nothing and everything is as it was.

## Nationalist Occupation

There is only one course recommended by common sense, and our better judgment. Neither the majority of the military nor the Congress nor public opinion considers the preservation of those islands in Chiang Kai-shek's hands worth a major war, especially now when such a war would leave Europe open to Russia.

We should do now what we have neglected to do before. Now, while the dangerous situation has subsided and we would not seem to be acting under pressure, we had better persuade Chiang Kai-shek, privately but firmly, to evacuate the offshore islands, making use of the fact that Formosa exists by our sufferance.

He can save face by announcing that he is doing so voluntarily, in order to make Formosa an inpregnable Gibraltar. Then we shall not find ourselves in a position in which we do not want to remain and from which we cannot extricate ourselves. Then we shall not run the risk of a war we do not want to fight and which few in this country and none at all among our Western allies think is worth fighting or is in a cause that can be justified.

And we had better act quickly, while we can.

NATHANIEL PEPPER,

New York, April 24, 1959.

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